

# Battle of Britain: The few are still remembered

By Malcolm Smith  
Battle of Britain reunion committee member

*Editor's note: The Battle of Britain Fighter Association annual reunion will take place here July 12 and includes a memorial service and banquet. For more information about the event, call Capt. James Capaldo at Ext. ????*

The celebration held by the United States Air Force at RAF Lakenheath is one of the most important events for the Battle of Britain Fighter Association.

This prestigious gathering has been held every year since 1971.

The annual event began when a young USAF pilot, Capt. Ward Boyce, was posted to the 30th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron at RAF Alconbury in Cambridgeshire.

He had studied the Battle of Britain and it was his ambition to visit the fighter squadrons in Southeast England, which bore the brunt of the battle, and meet some of the distinguished fighter pilots who fought in one of the most important engagements of World War II.

In the small Kent village of Brasted stands a picturesque 17th century pub known as the White Hart Inn. The White Hart is also close to RAF Biggin Hill, the most celebrated of all the Battle of Britain airfields.

It became a second home to the young fighter pilots during the war. Many of the flyers signed their names on a blackout screen that was kept in display in the bar until 1974. It now stands in the RAF Museum at Hendon in North London.

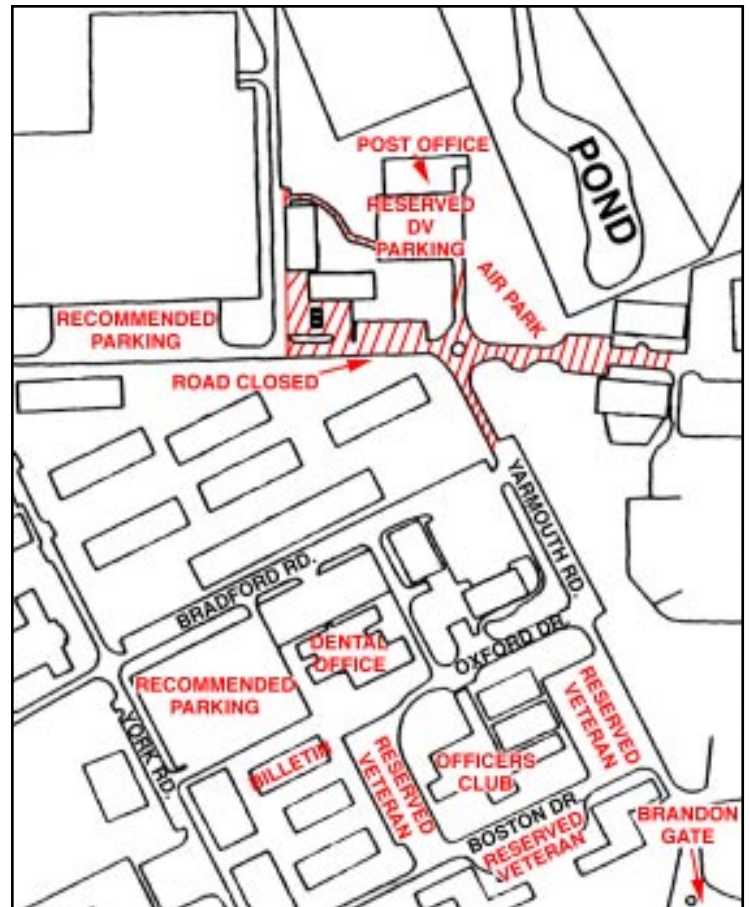
Boyce heard about the White Hart and visited the pub during a tour of airfields in the region. He decided to host a party for Battle of Britain veterans as his squadron's hideaway, known as "The Farm" at Lower Luddinton.

This building, loaned to them by Prince William of Gloucester, himself a highly experienced pilot, was used by the 30th TRS as a second mess for entertaining and off-duty relaxation. The first party was a somewhat small affair with just three Battle of Britain veterans attending -- Group Captains Rupert Clerke and Bobby Oxspring and Wing Commander Ian Cosbie.

The numbers grew over the years, and the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in 1990 saw the largest ever gathering at Alconbury.

A total of 105 veterans attended this memorable occasion, which was graced by the presence of Her Royal Highness, Princess Alice, the Duchess of Gloucester, who at the age of 90, insisted on a "walk-about" to meet all the guests.

However, the end of the Cold War meant the closure of a number of USAF bases in Britain including Alconbury.



Graphic provided by MSgt. Edmund Branch

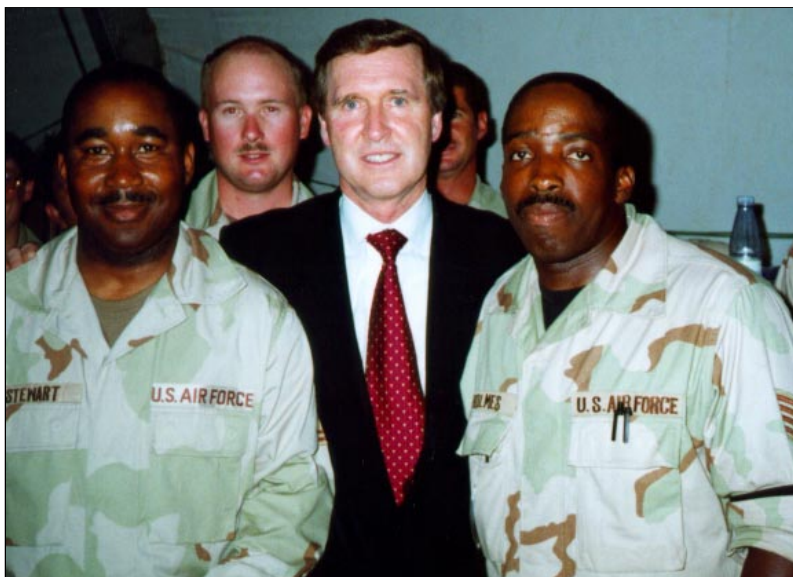
## The parking plan for Saturday's 1:30 p.m. Battle of Britain memorial ceremony includes road closures.

The last function there in 1991 was a great success but tinged with sadness. However, as the evening came to a close, it was announced that Lakenheath would continue the fine tradition.

The veterans are deeply grateful to Boyce, the United States Air Force and the commanding officer of the RAF Lakenheath for continuing this tradition.

The continued success of the gathering remains in the hands of the pilots themselves.

They shared a common bond of courage and air combat experience against a determined and well-equipped enemy.



Courtesy photo

## Deployment visit

Defense Secretary William Cohen visits with deployed 48th Supply Squadron members June 15 at Prince Sultan Air Base, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia. With Secretary Cohen are, from left, TSgt. Arthur Stewart, MSgt. Brian Sveda and SSgt. Michael Holmes. The three are members of the 48th SUPS materiel storage and distribution flight. They are assigned to the 4404th Logistics Support Squadron in support of Operation Southern Watch.